



## HOUSING FOCUS GROUP

Monday, April 29, 2013 | 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Buchanan Auditorium, Mansfield Library

### Minutes

*Present- Rebecca Fields, Kathy Ward, John Armstrong, Jill Cogan, Peter Millman, Brian McCarthy, Wendy Kopp, Karin Lipinski, Chunlong Liu, Alexa Kebalo, John, Sobanik, Brian Townsend, Carole Masters, Steve Kegler, Neil Faccihinetti, Kaishuang Cao, Richard Cournoyer, Don Hoyle, Toivo Kask, Betty Wassmundt, Lida Bilokur, and Stacy Vens. Staff: Mike Nintean, Kevin Grunwald, Linda Painter, Jennifer Kaufman. Consultant: Larissa Brown*

The meeting was called to order by Larissa Brown, Project Director from Goody Clancy.

- I. **Introductions-** Members of the Advisory Group Introduced themselves
- II. **Review of Mansfield Tomorrow project and the purpose of the housing strategy report-** Larissa Brown gave an overview of the Mansfield Tomorrow Project and how the housing strategy fits into the overall plan.
- III. **Review and discussion of housing existing conditions and trends-** Larissa reviewed the summary of population and household data distributed to the group.
- IV. **Review and discussion of housing issues and potential goals**
  - **Identified so far in public meetings and comment-**Larissa distributed and reviewed a list of housing issues that been presented in the public meetings. With regard to UConn expansion and housing concerns, she discussed examples of other techniques used by State College, Pennsylvania including a point system that can result in revocation of a rental license for a specific unit for a certain time period. Mike Nintean noted that such a change would need to conform to Connecticut statutes, and potentially could make the town responsible for relocation expenses.
  - **Other housing issues**
    - Most people agreed with the issues that had been discussed thus far. The focus group members agreed that affordability needed to be addressed. Mansfield currently meets the state minimum for affordable housing but with the increase in housing units added to the inventory, Mansfield may fall below the minimum at some point. Rebecca Fields from the

Housing Authority indicated that the section 8 housing voucher program needs to be funded more consistently. Mansfield is a very difficult place to live for those with low and extremely low income. Members of the focus group discussed the possibility of allowing co-housing as a way to offer more affordable options. Larissa discussed the option of a Community Land Trust.

- John Sobanik- stated that he felt that there needed to be increased density around the university. He indicated his interest in having purpose built student housing that provides the students with privacy and affordability. He stated that the site access and control were very important factors. He has seen a great deal of improvement in communication between landlords and the police.
- Alexa Kebalo raised the point that decreasing the number of unrelated individuals who are able to live together from 4 to 3 may cause more single family houses to be rented because the existing houses could not house as many students.
- Kaishuang Cao, a renter, talked about the importance of housing within walking/biking distance to campus and jobs. He sees this as a problem especially for international grad students and workers because they need to wait 3 months before they are able to obtain a driver's license.
- Peter Millman talked about the need for clear communication and coordination between UConn and the Town.
- Sgt. Cournoyer discussed security and safety concerns related to student housing areas.

**V. Draft housing goals for Mansfield Tomorrow-** Larissa provided a handout of Potential Housing Goals that she had drafted for discussion by the group. Suggestions including being both ambitious (strive to exceed, not just meet, standards, while also setting realistic goals.

**VI. Public Comment-** No public comments

**VII. Next steps and Adjourn-** Larissa will be back in touch with the members to discuss the next meeting time. In the meantime, she will be more fully developing the housing strategy based on the discussion. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:55 pm.